



Introduction to Ephesians 1:15-23 Sunday, October 8, 2017
Pastor Don Denyes

Our core beliefs are evident from how we speak. A person who has what one preacher called a “gloomy tinge” will inevitably be pessimistic in their outlook and that will come across in their speech. A person who is discontent with life will likely speak about all of the problems they face and how things would be better if their circumstances would just change in their favor. On the other hand, a person who has thought long and hard about the blessings of God which have been bestowed on us in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit will not be able to contain their joy and it will overflow in how they interact with others.

This latter disposition is clearly representative of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1. Having just raved about the glorious grace of God in the gospel, Paul continues in exuberant praise and prayer to God on behalf of the people at Ephesus. His goal is that they would know God as clearly as he does (as he’s been reflecting on already in verses 3-14). Were Paul alive today, I’m confident he would be praying the same things for us as he did for them—seeing as our greatest need (to know and love God) hasn’t changed.

Context

The prayer Paul reflects on in Ephesians 1:15-23 is typical of Paul’s letters (see Rom. 1:8-10; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12). His prayers always reflect a desire to see greater spiritual maturity among the churches. Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding are common themes for Paul in his prayers. He knows that whatever theological vision or practical exhortation he might issue in the remainder of the letter will all be for naught if the people receiving the letter don’t have insight that can only be given by the Holy Spirit. He thus demonstrates the necessity of prayer for effective ministry.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

“Prayer for Understanding”

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 1.15 (on prayer)

- Motivation 15
- Persistence 16, 17
- Gratitude 16
- Focus 16
- Request 17-19

Jeremiah 9:23-24: “This is what the LORD says, ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strongman boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the LORD.”

- I. Knowing God Better
- II. Knowing What God Has Given Us
 - God’s Hope
 - God’s Inheritance
 - God’s Power

God’s Power Revealed

- Resurrection of Christ
- Exaltation of Christ
- Our Resurrection 2.1-5
- Our Exaltation 2.6

Discuss

- 1) What is the most significant biblical/spiritual insight you have had in the last year?
- 2) How would you characterize the kinds of things Paul prays for in this passage? (Physical needs, spiritual needs, changes in circumstance, intercession for others, etc.) Does that reflect the kinds of things we pray for? If not, how can we change that?
- 3) Is your prayer life concerned more with praise or petition (prayer requests)? What would it look like to have a more balanced prayer life?
- 4) Pastor Don, in his sermon, used this J.I. Packer quote from the introduction to *Knowing God*: “[My conviction] is that ignorance of God—ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him—lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today.” Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? What do you see in your own life or in the lives of other Christians that causes you to draw that conclusion?
- 5) How does knowing about God’s power as demonstrated in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus give us comfort in the midst of our daily trials?